

CONSUMER HIGHLIGHTS

MARCH 2001

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MARCH CALENDAR
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SAMPLE THE SPECTRUM

Seasonal Fruits and Vegetables are Coming Down the Runway

(Bethesda, MD)-Move over Gucci and Donna Karan. This season, all eyes are on Yves St. L'Orange, Versquashi, and Calvin Lime!

It's time to get fashionable, says the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) 5 A Day for Better Health Program. Be a fashion plate: you'll look better, feel fitter, and your friends will be green with envy. Just dress your plate in the designer colors of spring and summer's fruits and vegetables. Color your daily diet with bright oranges (carrots, mandarin oranges, sweet potatoes and mango), deep reds (tomatoes, cherries and strawberries), dark greens (broccoli, asparagus and kale), beautiful blues and purples (blueberries, eggplant and plums), and accent it with sunshine yellow (squash, pineapple and corn).

"Color, color, color is the rule to live by," advises Gloria Stables, M.S., R.D., director of the NCI's 5 A Day for Better Health Program. "The more reds, oranges, greens, yellows, and blues you see on the plate, the more health promoting properties you are getting from your fruit and vegetable choices."

There are more reasons to eat the rainbow than aesthetics, Ms. Stables points out. Nutrition research shows that colorful fruits and vegetables contain essential nutrients, vitamins and phytochemicals that improve health, help you feel more energetic, and may reduce your risk of cancer. Here are the specifics...

REDS

When you add deep reds or bright pinks to your daily diet, you are also adding a powerful antioxidant called lycopene. Lycopene is found in tomatoes, red and pink grapefruit, watermelon and guava. A diet rich in lycopene has been suggested to reduce the risk of select cancers, including prostate cancer.

GREENS

Your mom said, "Eat your greens." The National Cancer Institute says, "Eat your greens." You probably tell your family, "Eat your greens." But do you know why this color is so essential to your diet? Not only do these vegetables look great and taste wonderful, but they are rich in the phytochemicals that keep you healthy. For example, the carotenoids—lutein and zeaxanthin—that are found in spinach, collards, kale and broccoli have antioxidant properties that protect your eyes by keeping your retina strong. Also, research shows that green cruciferous vegetables (like cabbage, brussel sprouts, cauliflower, kale and turnips) may reduce the risk of cancerous tumors!

ORANGES

Orange, the color of a blazing sun, is a must-have in your daily diet. Orange fruits and vegetables like sweet potatoes, mangos, carrots, and apricots, include beta carotene. This carotenoid is a natural antioxidant and enhances your immune system. In addition to being a powerful health-protector, the orange group is rich in Vitamin C and Vitamin E. Folate, most often found in leafy greens, is also found in orange fruits and vegetables and is a vitamin B that may help prevent some birth defects. With a chemical make-up this good for you, the orange group should always be part of your daily diet.

YELLOW

Bright yellows have many of the same perks as the orange groups: high in essential vitamins and carotenoids. Pineapple, for example, is rich with Vitamin C, manganese, and the natural enzyme, bromelain. Bromelain is great to add to a meal to aid in digestion and reduce bloating. Additionally, corn and pears are high in fiber. Yellow fruits and vegetables belong to many different families, but they all share the common bond of health enhancing and great taste.

BLUES/PURPLES

Blues and purples not only add beautiful shades of tranquility and richness to your plate, they add health-enhancing flavonoids, phytochemicals, and antioxidants. Anthocyanins, a phytochemical, are pigments responsible for the blue color in fruits and vegetables, and they may help defend against harmful carcinogens. Blueberries, in particular, are rich in Vitamin C and folic acid and high in fiber and potassium.

SAVOR THE SPECTRUM OF THE SEASON

This is not a single-color season. When it comes to your health, there is no such thing as clashing colors. In fact, color contrasts can really complement your health-improving efforts. Blue does go with orange...anyone who has mixed fresh blueberries with a can of mandarin oranges can tell you that. Green and red are opposite on the color wheel, but when green and red peppers are sautéed together, opposites attract! Dressing your plate with the brightest, wildest color combinations is an essential part of being the model of perfect health.

So be a fashion plate. The best, and healthiest one is the most colorful one. Splashes of red and orange should accent spreads of green and yellow. This season, get your "5 A Day" the colorful way!

The 5 A Day program is a joint initiative of the National Cancer Institute and the Produce for Better Health Foundation to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables to at least five servings daily for better overall health. For more recipes and ideas on how to color your daily diet with fruits and vegetables, check out the 5 A Day web site at www.5aday.gov.

STROKE YOUR SPIRIT

Stress can "short-circuit your brain's ability to function" Here are some suggested strategies to manage stress:

- ***Tune in to music.*** Research shows that music calms the brain, inspires creativity and helps you focus your thoughts so you're more productive.
- ***Get a pet.*** Taking care of a pet helps you feel responsible, wanted and needed. A dog that requires walking will also prompt you to get regular exercise.
- ***Laugh a lot.*** Deep, hearty laughter boosts the immune system and produces endorphins, which are natural painkillers. Buy a video that makes you laugh out loud and play it daily.
- ***Slowdown.*** It's important to have passion for your work, but you also need time for yourself, your family and your community. Accept that life isn't always perfect. Learn to

deal with the occasional rough spots and move on.

Home Economics Notes
January 2001

LONG-DISTANCE DEALS

Looking for a great long-distance deal? Think you've found the cheapest rates, but still confused by all the ads? Here's how to sort out what's clearly in ads and what's not.

Look for all the information related to **PRICE**.

Monthly Fees: When an ad promises 10 cents a minute, look for any monthly fees or surcharges you'll have to pay to get that rate.

Minimum Charges: Look for minimum charges for each call. If every call has a 50-cent minimum, even a two-minute call can cost you 50 cents. On "up to 20 minutes for a dollar" plans, a one-minute call or a message you leave on an answering machine is a dollar.

Climbing Rates: An ad may say that all calls up to 20 minutes are a dollar. Look for information on what happens to the rate structure after 20 minutes. Rates may increase dramatically.

Look for all the information related to **RESTRICTIONS** on the advertised rates.

Time Restrictions: Is the advertised rate available when you want it? Some rates may apply only at certain times of the day or only on certain days of the week. What are the rates at the other times?

Geographic Restrictions: Is the advertised rate available on all long distance calls — those that you make to someone in another state as well as those that you make to someone in another city in your own state? Some plans do not include long distance calls in the same state. Find out what those rates are and factor them in when you make your decision.

Promotional Restrictions: Are the advertised rates constant or an introductory offer that's good for a limited time — like the first 60 days of your subscription? If so, what are the rates once the promotion is over?

Decode **COMPARATIVE CLAIMS**.

Basic Rates: An ad promising "50 percent off the basic rate" isn't a good deal because the "basic" rate is another term for the highest rate available.

Comparable Services: When ads compare calling rates, are the services comparable? Is the information on both sides of the comparison as current as possible?

Look for the **FINE PRINT**. Read it.

Advance Work: Offers and restrictions vary. Each long distance provider has their own deals. Read the details from all the companies you are considering before you sign up. If you have questions, call the company for an explanation.

Look at your **MONTHLY BILLS** carefully.

Pay attention to your bill, checking to make sure you are being charged exactly what you expected. If you think there's a mistake, or if you just don't understand your bill, call your provider for an explanation.

Federal Trade Commission
February 2000

TOP 10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT CONTROLLING DEBT

1. Americans are loaded with credit-card debt. Each of us has got \$5000 worth, and the average rate is about 18%. That's not quite as much as loan sharks charge, but it's a drain and a trap that keeps too many people from saving.

2. Don't let debt break your back. If you have more debt than you can manage, now is the time to get help. Before you consider drastic steps like bankruptcy, try the Consumer Credit Counseling Service, which is listed in your local Yellow Pages. For a small fee, you can get help negotiating a payment plan that will keep your creditors at bay.

3. Get a handle on your spending. If you are like most people, you fritter away thousands of dollars without much thought to what you are buying. By making a budget, you can find out where the money goes — and start directing more of the wasted dollars to savings.

4. Dump the highest rate debts first. The key to getting out of debt is to methodically pay down the bills with the highest interest rates first.

5. Don't fall into the minimum trap. If you just pay the minimum on credit-card bills, it will take you 20 years or more to pay them off. That means you'll pay more than five times the actual debt in interest. Ouch.

6. Watch where you borrow. It's convenient to borrow against your 401(k) or your home to pay off high-rate debt. But that can be dangerous. You could lose your home, or fall short of your investing goals at retirement.

7. Some debt is good. Borrowing for a home, college or a car makes good sense. Just don't borrow more than you can afford to pay back.

8. Some debt is bad.

Don't borrow for things that you consume quickly, such as clothes, meals, vacations. There's no quicker way to fall into debt hell. Instead, put aside some cash each month for these items so you can pay the bill in full.

9. Expect the unexpected.

Build a cash cushion that you can get at quickly in case of an emergency. If you don't have such a cushion, a broken furnace or other calamity will wreck your budget and push you into a seat on the ship of credit-card slaves.

10. Don't be so quick to pay down your mortgage. If you pour all your cash into your mortgage, you'll have no cushion to fall back on. Better to borrow as much as you can afford when you are buying a house. And with today's low interest rates you can probably get a better return on your money with other investments.

**National Nutrition Month 2001 –
Key Messages
National Nutrition Month® - -
March 2001**

Food & Fitness:

Build a Healthy Lifestyle

Eating is one of life's greatest pleasures. There are so many foods and ways to build a healthy lifestyle - there is lots of room for choice. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2000 offers great ideas and sensible guidelines to help you with these choices. National Nutrition Month® is celebrated each year in March - this year, learn to live the Dietary Guidelines to Build a Healthy Lifestyle!

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans begin with the basics of the ABCs for you and your family's health. These guidelines are intended for healthy children (ages 2 and older) and adults of any age.

Aim for fitness.

Build a healthy base.

Choose sensibly.

Aim for fitness - that means aim for a healthy weight and be physically active every day.

- A healthy weight is the key to a long, healthy life.
- Over time, even a small decrease in calories eaten and a small increase in physical activity can keep you from gaining weight or help you lose weight.
- Engage in 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity most, preferably all, days of the week.

Make physical activity a regular part of your routine.

- Moderate physical activity is any activity that requires about as much energy as walking 2 miles in 30 minutes.

Build a healthy base. Let the Food Guide Pyramid guide you so that you get the vitamins, minerals, energy, and other healthful substances from foods your body needs each day. Make grains, especially whole grains, fruits, and vegetables the foundation of your meals. This forms a base for good nutrition and health. Foods that are safe from harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites, and chemical contaminants are vital for healthful eating.

- There are many healthful eating patterns. Different people like different foods and like to prepare the same foods in different ways.
- Since foods within the same food group differ in their array of nutrients and other healthful substances, choosing a variety helps you get all the nutrients and fiber you need. It can also keep your meals interesting from day to day.
- Also choose some low-fat dairy products and low-fat foods from the meat and beans group each day. It's fine to enjoy fats and sweets occasionally.
- Wash hands often; keep raw meats and ready-to-eat foods separate; cook to proper temperatures; and refrigerate promptly to below 40°.

Choose sensibly. Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat. Choose beverages and foods that limit your intake of sugars. Choose and prepare foods with less salt.

- Choose low-fat dairy products, cooked dried beans and peas, fish, and lean meats and poultry.
- Use the Nutrition Facts Label to help you choose foods lower in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. Read the label to compare and help identify foods lower in sodium.
- Take care not to let foods high in sugar crowd out other foods you need to maintain health, such as low-fat milk or other good sources of calcium.
- Choose herbs or spices on foods like grilled or roasted entrees, baked potatoes, and salads to help you limit sodium intake.

National Nutrition Month
March 2001

GARDENER'S CORNER

Spring is just around the corner, but don't drop your guard! Though it's tempting to start planting, fertilizing and other projects in early March, keep a close eye on long range weather predictions.

Past weather records indicate that a frost or freeze is highly probable during March. Gardeners in the Southern, or coastal part of Santa Rosa County are less likely to face such a threat.

Repairing Cold Injury

Varying amounts of freeze injury will be seen on shrubs and perennials this spring. The more cold sensitive species can be pruned by removing dead branches as new growth emerges. Some that will need special attention include: Oleander, butterfly bush, lantana and Mexican heather.

Allow plenty of time for tender perennials to recover. Some, though killed to the ground, can sprout from buds below the surface as temperatures rise. Recovery can be rapid once new growth emerges.

Spring Fertilizing Tips

- * Choose a low phosphate containing product with a ratio of 3-1-2 or 3-1-3 (16-4-8, 12-4-8, 15-5-12, etc.) that provides 50% or more of its nitrogen in a slow or controlled release form.
- * Calculate the square footage of all areas within the landscape – lawn, shrub beds and flower gardens.
- * Apply fertilizer by broadcasting over the entire area.
- * Use a maximum of 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of area. Example: 6 2/3 pounds of 16-4-8 fertilizer/1000 sq. ft.
- * Water thoroughly after fertilizing in order to prevent burning and to activate the nutrients.
- * **Note:** The so-called "acid loving plants" (azaleas, camellias, gardenias and blueberries) should not be fertilized with general purpose products. Instead, use an acid forming fertilizer such as "Azalea/Camellia Special" that contains no nitrogen in the nitrate form.

Try Something New

This spring promises to be the most interesting yet at local gardening outlets. In addition to the usual colorful annuals and perennials, look for a wider selection of ornamental grasses, tropical and subtropical perennials, native shrubs and more water gardening plants and supplies.

Suggested Plants For Summer Color

✓ **Zinnias** – Sow seeds of the tall growing varieties such as “State Fair” and “Big Red.” If planted in well prepared beds that receive full sun, they flower throughout the summer. Light, monthly fertilizer applications and the removal of spent blossoms results in even more flowering. They also make great cut flowers – keeping for a week or more in the vase.

✓ **Pentas** – Choose stocky one gallon sized plants for spring planting. They are available in red, white, pink and lavender. Red plants are most vigorous, and seem to attract more butterflies than the other colors. They prefer full sun and soil that has been enriched with organic amendments.

In The Vegetable Garden

Establish the warm season vegetables as soon as the danger of frost has passed. Transplant tomatoes, peppers and eggplants. Sow seeds of beans, squash, cucumbers, southern peas, okra and sweet corn.

Dan Mullins
Horticulture Agent



RECIPE

LOW-FAT CORN BREAD

1 c. all-purpose flour
1 c. cornmeal
2 Tbsp. sugar
2 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
2 egg whites
1 c. skim milk
¼ c. unsweetened applesauce

In a bowl, combine the flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder and salt. In another bowl, combine egg whites, milk and applesauce. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened. Pour into a 9-in. square baking pan coated with non-stick cooking spray. Bake at 400° for 15-20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Serve warm. **Yield:** 12 servings. **Nutritional Analysis:** One serving equals 101 calories, 198 mg sodium, trace cholesterol, 21 gm carbohydrate, 3 gm protein, trace fat, 1 gm fiber. **Diabetic Exchange:** 1½ starch

SAUSAGE CHEESE MUFFINS

1 lb. bulk hot pork sausage
1 can (10-¾ oz.) condensed cheddar cheese soup, undiluted
½ c. milk
2 to 3 tsp. rubbed sage
3 c. biscuit/baking mix

In a skillet over medium heat, cook sausage until no longer pink; drain. In a bowl, combine soup, milk, sage and sausage. Stir in the biscuit mix just until moistened. Fill greased miniature or regular muffin cups two-thirds full. Bake at 400° for 15-20 minutes or until muffins test done. **Yield:** 4 dozen mini-muffins or 2 dozen regular muffins.

CRUNCHY CASHEW PORK

2 tsp. cornstarch
 ½ c. chicken broth
 ¼ c. cider or red wine vinegar
 2 Tbsp. soy sauce
 2 tsp. plus 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil,
divided
 ¾ lb. boneless pork, cut into thin
 strips
 1 c. thinly sliced carrots
 1 c. broccoli florets
 3 green onions, thinly sliced
 ½ c. cashews
 Hot cooked rice

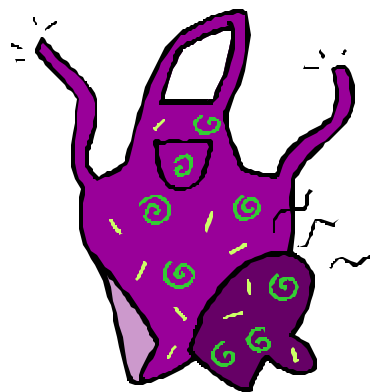
In a bowl, combine cornstarch, broth, vinegar, soy sauce and 2 teaspoons oil until smooth; set aside. In a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat, stir-fry pork in 1 tablespoon oil until no longer pink; remove and keep warm. Heat remaining oil; stir-fry carrots and broccoli until crisp-tender. Stir in broth mixture and green onions. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Return meat to pan and heat through. Stir in cashews. Serve over rice. Yield: 4 serving



SLOW COOKER LASAGNA

1 lb. ground beef
 1 large onion, chopped
 2 garlic cloves, minced
 1 can (29 oz.) tomato sauce
 1 c. water
 1 can (6 oz.) tomato paste
 1 tsp. salt
 1 tsp. dried oregano
 1 pkg. (8 oz.) no-cook lasagna noodles
 4 c. (16 oz.) shredded mozzarella
 cheese
 1-1/2 c. (12 oz.) small-curd cottage
 cheese
 ½ c. grated Parmesan cheese

In a skillet, cook beef, onion and garlic over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Add the tomato sauce, water, tomato paste, salt and oregano; mix well. Spread a fourth of the meat sauce in an ungreased 5-qt. slow cooker. Arrange a third of the noodles over sauce (break the noodles if necessary). Combine the cheeses; spoon a third of the mixture over noodles. Repeat layers twice. Top with remaining meat sauce. Cover and cook on low for 4-5 hours or until noodles are tender. **Yield:** 6-8 servings.



The use of trade names in this publication is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product names and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others.

Sincerely,

Linda K. Bowman, R.D., L.D.
Extension Agent IV
Family & Consumer Sciences
Santa Rosa County

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